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ABSTRACT

This publication describes counseling approaches supervisors and human resource professionals can use to help marginal employees become better adjusted and more productive in the workplace. Three case studies are also provided for training purposes. The counseling tools are as follows: (1) Adlerian counseling, involving the belief that humans' interest in the social aspects of life is a prime motivator for many behaviors; (2) behavioral and cognitive-behavioral approaches, which hold that all behaviors are learned, faulty thinking leads to inappropriate behavior, and old behaviors can be replaced by learning new behaviors; (3) existential counseling, focusing on the meaning of life and humans' responsibility and freedom of choice for deciding their fate; (4) gestalt therapy, focusing on the importance of being whole and understanding how earlier events affect current problems and stresses; (5) person-centered counseling, which holds that all humans are basically good and trustworthy and tend toward growth, awareness, and trust in self; (6) rational-emotive therapy, holding that humans are both rational and irrational and cause problems for themselves by what they think; (7) reality therapy, focusing on getting clients to realize what they are doing now and deciding whether it is working; and (8) transactional analysis, which holds that the decision to change and responsibility to change are the client's. Discussion questions follow each case study. (YLB)

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Workplace Counseling Tools

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August 28, 2001

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Abstract

Many of today's workers lack the credentials, attitudes, work habits, and/or social skills companies prefer. Never-the-less organizations continue to retain and hire these "marginal" employees. They fear that if they let these workers go they may not be able to replace them. The end result is that managers, supervisors, and human resource professionals strive to meet their organization's performance goals with smaller work forces containing higher percentages of "marginal" workers. This article presents and gives examples of eight counseling tools supervisors and human resource professionals can use with marginal worker to help them become better adjusted and more productive in the workplace. Three true-to-life case studies are provided for training purposes.

Workplace Counseling Tools

By James J. Kirk Ed. D., Connie Woody, Naomi Burns, Sherrie Howard, & Misty Rice

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In today's strong economy highly qualified workers are in short supply. Furthermore, many available workers lack the credentials, attitudes, work habits, and social skills companies prefer. Non-the-less organizations continue to retain and hire these "marginal" employees. They fear that if they let workers go they may not be able to replace them. The end result is that managers, supervisors, and human resource professionals strive to meet their organization's performance goals with smaller work forces containing higher percentages of "marginal" workers.

The challenges for managers and supervisors are varied and complex. For example, how do you get highly independent and/or "marginal" workers to show up for work five days a week, be at work on time, cooperate with other employees, be courteous to customers, cooperate with other workers, meet deadlines, perform quality work, agree to additional training, and not take a job across town for a measly thirty dollars more a month? One potential solution is to strengthen interpersonal relationships between supervisors and subordinates and to develop a positive work environment. This can be accomplished by referring some workers for outside counseling and having supervisors to take on more of a "counselor" as opposed to an "authoritarian" role. With a limited amount of training various counseling practices can be successfully used by supervisors to create a positive work environment in which workers feel understood, valued, and supported.

The following description of 8 counseling tools (see Table One) and 3 case studies are intended to provide managers and supervisors an overview of selected counseling practices. The

nine counseling tools were selected in regard to their potential application in the workplace. It is recommended that this material be presented in a group setting where participants can engage in a lively discussion of the case studies. After discussing the case studies, the group may want to

Eitht Counseling Tools

Tool #1 Adlerian Counseling

The approach known as Adlerian counseling focuses on the belief that humans are interested in the social aspects of life and this interest serves a prime motivator for many behaviors. Each person creates his or her own lifestyle, is in control of the outcome, and has goals that influence growth. Adlerian counseling is versatile and can be used in many situations, including group and individual counseling, family and marital counseling, and correctional or rehabilitation counseling, as well as substance abuse programs. In the workplace, Adlerian counseling practices may also be used for improving an employee's performance. The counselor plays an encouraging role, and is equal to the client, focusing on the client's strengths to promote useful goals. The counselor may use such techniques as encouragement, paraphrasing, collaboration, modeling, gathering life data, and providing suggestions.

Claire has been a customer service representative for a large banking firm for five months, and is a good candidate for Adlerian counseling for performance improvement. She has worked with the company for four years, and is familiar with the company's products. She has learned the aspects of her new position, such as the different type of computer programs and working on the telephone for a full eight hours, quickly and proficiently. However, when customers evaluate Claire's effectiveness, she doesn't meet the expectations of the department. Claire isn't making mistakes, or being unfriendly to the customers, but something is not quite

Table 1 Workplace Counseling Tools

Counseling Approach	Description	For Use In Situations:
Adlerian Counseling Approach	Emphasizes social interest, encourages responsibility and setting appropriate goals by correcting mistaken assumptions	Performance Improvement, Goal Setting
Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral Counseling Approach	Focuses on learning as a way to change behavior, could relate to learning new skills or to learning new ways of thinking	Stress management, assertiveness training, diversity and cultural training
Existential Counseling Approach	Examines the relationship of individual experiences with the overall meaning of life	Cultural or diversity training, downsizing, changing positions and responsibilities, career counseling
Gestalt Therapy Approach	Focuses on how earlier events and experiences affect current problems and stresses, deals with "unfinished business"	Behavior problems, awareness training, organizational development
Person-Centered Counseling Approach	Focus is on empathy and acceptance, recognizing blocks to growth	Human relations problem situations, such as co-worker conflict, cultural and diversity training, changes in careers or positions and responsibilities
Rational-Emotive Therapy Approach	Focus is on changing irrational or misconceived thoughts and beliefs	Skills building, confidence building, possibly can be used with behavior problems
Reality Therapy Approach	Focuses on current behavior and the effect is has on "here and now," works to eliminate excuses	Behavior problems, co-worker conflict
Transactional Analysis Approach	Emphasizes change as a choice that must be made by the client	Disciplinary actions, behavior problems, co-worker conflict, possibly performance problems

*Table contents abstracted from (Corey, 1996)

right. She just doesn't seem to be putting forth any extra effort. After observing Claire for a day, her supervisor Margaret decides that some one-on-one coaching or counseling might help Claire. Margaret begins by focusing on Claire's strengths, and then assesses Claire's opinion about the situation. Claire's impression is that she is "doing enough." Margaret works with Claire to help her understand that "merely getting by" isn't enough in this position, and that going beyond mere competence improves the customers' opinions, the company's business growth, and in the end, Claire's overall status and position within the company. She does this by modeling the incorrect and then correct behavior, and encouraging Claire in her new attitudes and goals.

Tool #2 Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral Counseling

The Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral approaches to counseling have the underlying philosophy that all behaviors are learned, that faulty thinking leads to inappropriate behavior, and that old behaviors can be replaced by learning new behaviors. This approach emphasizes changing behavior by either acquiring and practicing new skills, learning new ways of thinking, or acquiring more effective ways of coping with problems. The focus is on here and now, rather than the past and the unconscious. The supervisor/counselor plays the role of educator, to help clients dispel faulty beliefs and to teach new behaviors and skills. This is done through such practices as reinforcement, modeling, assertion and skills training, coaching, changing language and thinking patterns, confronting faulty beliefs, role-playing, and imagery.

Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral counseling approaches can be useful to help clients make adjustments, change behaviors, change thoughts, dispel phobias, manage stress, be more assertive, and stop substance abuse, just to name a few. In work situations, behavioral and

cognitive-behavioral counseling can be used to defuse and/or resolve diversity or cultural clashes.

One such case of behavioral/cognitive-behavioral counseling to dispel a culture clash occurred during a six-month staff exchange between the southeastern U.S. location of an electronics company, and its sister plant in Tokyo. Jim, the Human Resource Development Director for Radio Electronics, spent a week preparing employees for the temporary relocation. He reviewed items such as the history of each region, public transportation and housing, and how to convert the currency. Jim couldn't understand why, after the first month of the exchange, he was receiving so many complaints from the participants. After all, they had all their living needs covered.

To better understand what was happening, Jim went to his supervisor Bill, Vice President of Human Resources. Bill explained that workers were experiencing major cultural clashes in their new work environment and were partially blaming him for not telling or preparing them to cope with the situation. Different approaches to the work environment were causing several clashes between the co-workers, and disrupting the day as well as the overall workflow. After examining his own beliefs, as well differences in the two cultures, Jim was able to better understand the problem and to revise his relocation training. He now realized that workers need more than financial and housing information to be successful in a new work culture.

Tool #3 Existential Counseling Approach

Existential counseling focuses on the meaning of life, and a human being's responsibility and freedom of choice for deciding one's fate. It examines the relationship of individual experience and being alone or with others with the meaning of life. A sense of self and individual growth is stressed. Existential counseling strives to help the individual realize that

they are responsible for their own life's events and how they view them, and to identify ideas or factors that block their freedom. The counselor stresses the uniqueness of the client, and focuses on building an authentic relationship and on sharing experiences. This type of therapy provides a way to understand anxiety, isolation, freedom, commitment, guilt and death.

Existential counseling can be used with people facing change, transition, or decision-making. It can be effective in cross-cultural counseling, as well as crisis intervention. This type of counseling might be combined with career development in instances of downsizing, layoffs, or plant closings.

For example, The Smith Corporation realizes that a layoff of over half its work force in one community is inevitable. The human resources department collaborates with several outsourced counselors who use existential counseling to provide outplacement counseling, as well as counseling to individuals who are having trouble coping with the change. These counselors work to help each person realize their own self worth, and how viewing a negative situation in a positive manner is helpful to oneself and the community in the long run.

Tool #4Gestalt Therapy

The Gestalt Theory focuses on the importance of being whole and understanding the importance of how earlier events affect current problems and stresses. Emphasis is on the "here and now," and on how avoidance and "unfinished business" relate to the client's ability for internal support. The counselor does not interpret, but helps the client make their own interpretations, and to deal with unfinished business and making choices. This is done through such techniques as role-playing, confrontation, imagery and fantasy, psychodrama, and reliving past experiences.

Gestalt therapy stresses change, and emphasizes doing, rather than merely talking about feelings. It can be used in situations relating to behavior problems, crisis intervention, organizational development, and awareness training.

As an example of gestalt therapy used in the workplace as an approach to awareness and behavior problems, consider Mary, who recently began working at a service company as an executive administrative assistant to the Vice President of Sales. Mary was looking forward to working with her new boss, Jill, and adjusted quite well to the new company. Two months after Mary began, however, Jill announced that she was moving on to another division. Her replacement would be Joe Elliot. Mary was immediately disgruntled, and claimed that Jill should have informed her of this considered move during the interview. After all, her perception of Jill was one of the reasons she accepted the position. Mary was hostile and uncooperative towards Joe. She never slacked in her duties, but she was just on the edge of insubordination. When Joe met with Mary to review the situation, Mary made the comment that "men just don't understand the life of the working woman," and that he was "just the same." Joe had his suspicions, and asked Mary if she would be willing to consult with the company's in-house mediator (a licensed social worker), to try to work this out. Mary was resistant, but agreed. During several meetings, the mediator asked some probing questions, allowed Mary to discuss her past work experiences, and performed role-plays in which the mediator was Mary's boss. Mary revealed that her former employer had sexually harassed her, and that was why she left for the new position. With the help of the counselor, Mary made the connection between this instance and her current hostility toward Joe. They were able to work through the situation and create a better working relationship.

Tool #5 Person-Centered Counseling

Person-centered counseling has a positive view of human nature. That is to say, that all humans are basically good and trustworthy, and have a tendency towards growth, awareness, and trust in self, if given the right conditions. The emphasis is on self-exploration, recognizing blocks to growth, and being more accepting of oneself, others, and the environment. The counselor focuses on empathy, acceptance, reflection of feelings, being genuine, and providing a safe environment and "being there" for the client. Person-centered counseling can be used in group or individual settings, and in human relations and cross-cultural training. It can also be used in crisis intervention, personal adjustment problems, and dealing with surface issues.

As an example, consider Laura, who has been with her current employer for over six years. Laura is in need of person-centered counseling to help her recognize the blocks she is placing on her own growth. She has accepted many transfers within the company, and always done an excellent job. Her performance reviews have always been excellent or above average. She has worked hard to further her education and training in hopes of preparing herself for "bigger and better things," and all of her supervisors have been aware of this. However, Laura has been offered a promotion three separate times in the past nine months, and turned down each one. Everything about the promotion would work for Laura, including the one that would have required her to relocate, but in each instance, she stated she "just wasn't ready." Her current supervisor, aware of all this, felt this was a confidence issue and recommended that Laura seek counseling from the Employee Assistance Program. Laura agreed, because she realized that if she didn't get past "not being ready," the offers would stop coming. In fact, she was surprised that they hadn't already. The counselor worked with Laura to help her accept her self and her capabilities, and to allow Laura to realize some of the fears she harbored about moving beyond

her comfort level.

Tool #6 Rational-Emotive Therapy

The Rational-emotive therapy approach holds that humans are both rational and irrational, and that they cause problems for themselves by what they think. This approach holds it is a mistake for people to describe themselves in the form of "should," for example, "should be," "ought to," etc. Rational-emotive therapy is viewed as being closely related to cognitive-behavior therapy, because focus is on changing irrational or misconceived thoughts and beliefs.

Rational-emotive counseling focuses on the use of self-talk, rational self-analysis and the counselor uses techniques such as disputing, persuasion, reasoning and teaching about emotions. In the workplace, this approach to counseling might be used where an employee is having a problem learning a new skill, or when an employee is displaying emotional outbursts in stressful situations.

An example of using the rational-emotive approach with an employee who needs to learn a new skill is seen in the following situation. Sam has been working with the Mold-It Tool and Die Company for fourteen years. He is an excellent worker and has won awards in trade competitions. When the company decided to upgrade their equipment to computer controlled machinery, Sam informed his supervisor that he was leaving to work for a smaller firm, a competitor, who still used the type of machinery he was familiar with. He said he "ought to be working in a company where he would do some good, not hold back progress." Sam's supervisor Bob was familiar with the rational-emotive theory, although he didn't know that was the correct name. He decided he could keep a valuable and talented employee, as well as help Sam, by working with Sam to think rationally about the new equipment. After all, the basis of operation was the same. It still required a person with talent and know-how to control the

computer; otherwise, the computer could not control the die machine. He helped Sam to come to terms with his fears about "being replaced by a machine." He also persuaded Sam to "visualize" himself actually operating the computer. After realizing that it was his tool and die making skill that would produce the end product, not the skill of the computer, Sam decided to remain at the Mold-It Tool and Die Company.

Tool #7 Reality Therapy

Reality therapy is also based on the belief that people are in charge of their own life, that they attempt to control the world around them, and that problems occur when they don't take responsibility for their own behavior. The focus here, though, is on getting the client to realize what they are doing now and whether or not it is working for them. They should focus on current behavior, and eliminate excuses. The counselor serves as a teacher and role model, helps the client evaluate their situation and make a plan, and promotes responsibility and freedom without placing blame.

Reality therapy works well in group and individual settings, and with less complex problems. It uses a positive and action oriented approach, and can be used to help individuals have more effective control over their life's events. In a workplace setting, reality therapy is an appropriate approach to working through behavior problems, and in situations of co-worker conflict.

Probably one of the most commonly seen uses of reality therapy in confronting behavior problems is seen in the example of the "always late" employee. Donna always has an excuse for being late, although the excuse is never one of her own blame: there are always large tractor-trailer trucks on the two lane she has to travel to work and they "won't let her pass" and won't speed up, a family member calls just as she is on her way out the door with ten minutes to make

the fifteen minute drive to work, the line at the gas station was too long and no one would let her in front of them, and so on. Max, Kim's immediate supervisor, helps her make a plan for avoiding these situations, such as putting gas in her car after work, so that she doesn't need to stop the next morning or during her lunch hour. When Kim realizes that she can control "what other people are doing to make her late," her tardiness problem practically disappears.

Tool #8 Transactional Analysis

Transactional analysis relies on the importance of the individual being able to analyze his or her actions and become aware of how those actions should be or could be changed. The belief is that people can change, if they know how. The responsibility for changing lies with the client's choice to do so.

Transactional analysis is often combined with Gestalt techniques to bring about change. Counselors may make specific contracts with the client on how they will bring about desired modifications in their behavior. This often involves confrontation, interrogation, illustration ("imagine 'what if'), and goal setting. Probably the most obvious use of this type of counseling in the workplace is seen in disciplinary situations for problem behaviors, although it can also be used as a tool to resolve co-worker conflicts.

Susan is a customer service manager who often uses transactional analysis in problem behavior situations. Her subordinate Linda is a customer service representative for a small printing firm. Each outside salesperson has one customer service rep that handles their order entry, order follow-up, phone messages and general customer relations. Linda is constantly complaining because she is behind in her work, and can't seem to get caught up. Her other co-workers don't seem to be behind, and Linda blames her situation on "having more work to do than the others," and that "her salesperson keeps piling more and more work on her." After some

observations, Susan realizes that Linda is not only constantly five to ten minutes late to work and coming back from breaks, but she also spends much of her time "visiting" with other workers. She uses this time to compare workloads, and complain about the types of orders or service problems her salesperson brings her. While this is disruptive to the other customer service reps, they still manage to get right back to work and complete their duties on time.

The next time Linda complains about being behind in her work, Susan decides to have a conference with her. She confronts her about her time and work habits. She illustrates to Linda how she herself budgets her time, and draws up an informal contract that will easily allow Linda to complete her work without feeling overwhelmed. Linda is resistant at first, but agrees to give it a try. After all, Susan used real, although anonymous, examples of how much each customer service rep was doing in an average day. After trying Susan's suggestions for a couple of weeks, Linda slowly realizes that she is changing her work habits and feeling more satisfied at the end of each day and week about her accomplishments.

Case Studies

Case Study 1 A Violent Employee

Mountain Tools is a company that manufactures tool parts for different types of machinery. The home office is in Canada and there are branches throughout the United States. There are 75 employees at the Gibson City location. The employees consist of warehouse, clerical and administrative staff. There are approximately 60 employees who work in the warehouse. They are divided into teams and each team has a specific duty. For example, one team sorts the parts, one team packs the parts into boxes, another team loads the shipment onto delivery trucks, etc. Most teams consist of 6-8 members.

Team One's responsibility is to sort through the parts and separate them into categories as the parts run on a conveyer belt. Larry, who has been employed with the company 7 years, supervises them. The members of Team One include Mark, April, Jason, Gary, Patrick, James, and Robbie. All of the members of Team One have been employed with the company for at least two years. The company has a "good ol' boy policy" regarding family members working together. Many of the workers have family members that work in the company, even on the same team. For example, on Team One, April and Mark are first cousins, and Mark's father works in the company as a supervisor for another team. Also, Jason and Gary are brothers and their father works in the company as well. Their sister also works in the company as the front desk receptionist.

Throughout the two years the team has worked together, Larry has received several serious complaints about James from the rest of the team. On one occasion, Mark and April were listening to country music on the radio. James picked up the radio and smashed it on the floor because he didn't like the music. He did not apologize for his actions and did not offer to buy them another radio.

On another occasion, James was listening to a particular radio station, and Patrick switched the station without asking permission. Later that day when Patrick tried to sit in a chair, James pulled it out from under him, causing him to crack his tailbone. James threatened Patrick by telling him; "If I ever see you outside of work I am going to kill you." Patrick did not report these threats to management because he felt that James was just blowing off steam.

These incidents were reported to Larry, who in turn reported the incidents to the Human Resource Director and the Vice President of the company. They called James into their office

and explained to him that this type of behavior was inappropriate and would not be tolerated. Meanwhile, other outbursts continued to happen. On one occasion, Robbie needed to borrow a particular tool from James' workspace. Without asking, Robbie went to the workspace and began looking through tools for the one he needed. When James discovered Robbie going through his tools, he pulled a knife out of his pocket and threatened Robbie that if he didn't get out of his area he would cut him. Terrified, Robbie decided not to report the incident to Larry because he was afraid of what James may do to him. However, some other workers in the warehouse overheard the incident and reported it to Larry.

Once again, Larry reported the incident to the Human Resource Director and Vice President. This time Larry recommended that James be terminated from employment immediately due to his inappropriate behavior. However, the HR Director and VP were afraid if they terminated James, he might become violent with them. Furthermore, they weren't sure how long it might take to replace him. They hoped that they could change his behavior rather than have to terminate him. James was given a week off from work without pay.

Once James returned to work he seemed calmer and in more control of his temper, however, another outburst occurred three weeks later. Team One was taking one of two 15-minute daily breaks. There was a dartboard set up in the break room and Gary and Jason were throwing darts. At one point, James walked in front of the dartboard. Afraid that a dart might strike James, Jason yelled at him to move out of the way. James immediately physically attacked Jason, and Gary intervened. Jason and Gary left the warehouse and did not return for 2 hours. Jason later stated to Larry that he wanted to leave so that he could cool down from the confrontation and Gary left because he wanted to assure that his brother was not injured from the attack. However, both were suspended without pay for 3 days because they left work without

permission. Other workers in the warehouse were aware of the situation and told management that if they didn't fire James they were all going to quit. They could no longer work in an environment with a co-worker they feared.

During the time that James was employed at Mountain Tools he frequently boasted about his gun collection. He constantly talked about his times in the Vietnam War and he wore camouflage clothes almost everyday to work. In fact, Gary had purchased a gun from James and had seen his extensive gun collection.

Discussion Questions:

Which counseling approach would be best suited for this situation? Why?

What could Larry have done to stop these incidents from the be ginning?

What is management's responsibility to the other employee's in the company? What is their responsibility to James?

As the Human Resource Director or the Vice President, how would you have handled the situation differently?

Case Study 2 The Bartender Who Tended Too Well

The Sunshiny Inn is a 4-star hotel and resort located amid mountains and stream in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. The hotel has 160 rooms, 5 conference areas, 2 restaurants, a bar (the Heavenly Lounge), and a gift shop. The resort includes an 18-hole golf course, 2 tennis courts, and 2 pools. The Sunshiny Inn tends to have business people and wealthy tourists as guests.

Mr. Haggidy, the assistant manager of the Food and Beverage Department, has worked at the Sunshiny Inn for 4 years. He had not previously worked in Food and Beverage but feels quite comfortable in this position now. Mr. Haggidy has not had any formal training in interviewing and hiring, but feels confident that he is a good judge of character and has no qualms about his task of hiring for the Food and Beverage Department. Six months ago, a new bartender was needed for the Heavenly Lounge, so an advertisement was placed in the local paper. An interview was arranged for Shannon McClure, an applicant with very extensive restaurant experience and who had attended Bartending School. When queried about how comfortable she would feel in a bar setting, Shannon said, "I have had exposure to bars in the restaurants where I've worked and feel good about the skills I have learned at Bartending School." Although Shannon had not had direct bar experience, Mr. Haggidy received a good impression of her through the interview and she was hired.

Shannon, at age 35, had worked as a server in restaurants for as long as she could remember, but she had always thought being a bartender would be much more fun. Bartenders seemed to have a more relaxed job and they usually made more money than restaurant servers did. With this in mind, Shannon went to the Bartending Academy and then applied for the position at the Sunshiny Inn. When she was hired, Shannon was determined to work hard and as much as she could.

The head bartender in the Heavenly Lounge is Tristan Farron, age 43, and has worked there for 10 years. Tristan enjoys his job because he loves making conversation and cheering people up with his jokes. Shannon impressed him as being friendly and as a very hard worker. Tristan has not always been pleased with the people Mr. Haggidy hired in the past, but Shannon seemed to be doing well. She also worked some shifts in the restaurants, so she was sometimes at

the hotel from early in the morning until late at night. Tristan could not believe the amount of energy Shannon seemed to have.

After three months, it came to Mr. Haggidy's attention that much more liquor was being used than the amount of sales reflected. The only difference in the lounge was Shannon, and Mr. Haggidy wondered if the liquor shortage could be related to her. When the other bartenders were questioned, many said that the liquor supply often seemed unusually lower in one brand or another after Shannon's shifts. In fact, whole bottles had disappeared. The problem was serious for Mr. Haggidy because costs had risen much higher than they should be and he had complaints from the Food and Beverage manager.

Secondly, two servers had come forward in the past month to say that they noticed Shannon drinking quite a bit on the job when they came in the lounge. "She messes up our customers' drinks frequently and it gets quite frustrating," said the one server. Also, a number of guests had noted (via suggestion cards and personal comments) that Shannon was intoxicated when they were in the lounge. This was very serious! Customer satisfaction is essential in a 4-star hotel, and certainly having a tipsy bartender is not in the Sunshiny Inn's image. Tristan also noticed problems with Shannon on occasion. He had gotten to know Shannon quite well and liked her as a person, but had noticed that, at times, she would come in for a shift seeming slightly intoxicated. Also, Tristan often noticed a considerable amount of liquor gone after her shifts - more than the amount of sales from guests could account for. He hated to think of Shannon being involved.

The missing liquor could not be proved to be Shannon's fault so a meeting of the bar staff was called. "Our costs are much too high for the bar," Mr. Haggidy explained. "We must,

therefore, keep an inventory from now on to keep track of liquor usage." A big black book was placed behind the bar for this purpose with columns for "ins" and "outs" with places for initials. Unfortunately, not everyone used the book and new bartenders that came in weren't even told about the inventory keeping. Therefore, this idea was not successful.

Because of the comments about Shannon's drinking, a meeting was arranged between Mr. Haggidy and Shannon. Mr. Haggidy shared his concerns with Shannon and explained how important it was for the hotel to keep up their image. "Competition around here doesn't leave room for faults" he alluded. Shannon listened attentively and said that she was shocked about these comments from guests and staff. "I'm afraid my head is up in the clouds at times and I'm a terribly clumsy person, but I have never been intoxicated on the job" she emphatically stated. Shannon's attitude was good, though; she said she would try to keep her mind on her job more, and Mr. Haggidy left the meeting at that.

For about a week, Shannon seemed to improve and, in most cases, she was very popular with the guests. Often Mr. Haggidy would amble by the lounge to find Shannon and some guests in laughter. Eventually, though, complaints began coming in again. Another two and a half months went by and gradually complaints escalated to such an extent that whenever Shannon worked a bar shift, Mr. Haggidy expected someone to complain. Shannon was given fewer and fewer shifts because of this, but still Mr. Haggidy did not like hearing any reports of dissatisfied guests in the bar. The servers would also be held up, so guests in the restaurant had to wait longer for their service. Also, one night a night worker saw Shannon leaving with a whole bottle of liquor under her coat.

Eventually something even more serious occurred. Shannon came in at 6:00pm one night to relieve Tristan for the night shift. Tristan noticed that Shannon had been drinking and that she seemed upset. "Is everything all right, Shannon?" he queried. She weakly smiled and said she was fine. "I could take this shift if you're not feeling well" Tristan blurted out. "Thank you, Tristan," Shannon said warmly "but I really need the money. I'm fine really." He was not convinced, but was not sure what else to do. Tristan left feeling concerned. Much later that evening, the manager on duty was alerted by a disturbance in the lounge. When he walked in, Shannon and a guest were having a screaming match. Shannon was obviously intoxicated, and the guest obviously had also had too much to drink. Shannon was sent home to sober up and the manager on duty took over the lounge for the rest of the evening. The guest was finally calmed down and taken to his room. The other guests in the lounge were very vocal the rest of the evening about the event and their dissatisfaction with Shannon.

Discussion Questions:

Which counseling approach would be best suited for this situation?

What could have caused Shannon's behavior?

How should the HR department or Mr. Haggidy deal with Shannon?

Could this problem been avoided by any means?

Case Study 3 The Unbelievable Food Service Employee

"Foods 'R Us" is a catering, vending and cafeteria management company located primarily in the eastern United States, with the parent corporation in Great Britain. This company provides contracted food services to manufacturing organizations, health care organizations, and major

commercial businesses such as phone companies, retail stores, and hotels/motels. In addition, "Foods 'R Us" provides food service management to major conventions such as the national furniture market, hardware shows, and textile conventions. Major golf tournaments have contracted with this company to provide food service during their weeklong events as well.

The Southeastern Area of "Foods 'R Us" is divided into regions, and the regions are divided into divisions. An operations manager leads each division. The supervisors report to the operations manager, and the route drivers report to the supervisors. The number of supervisors in each division is based on the division's annual revenue. The company services most of their customers via route drivers who are responsible for route sales and service. In addition to the route drivers, the company provides "attendants" at larger manufacturing locations to accommodate several break rooms, and to maintain the appropriate food selection levels in these particular accounts. If the customer elects to have a cafeteria in their business, "Foods 'R Us" provides the necessary cafeteria management and employees to cook, clean and serve.

The routes are structured as equally as possible, based on revenue, location, and the time required in each account. Time required in each account is the customer service portion of the route sales and service job description. Cleaning, maintenance service when required, stocking, merchandising, and maintaining the company's inventory control standards are all aspects of the route sales and service job description. It is also important to note that the route driver's workday begins between 4:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. depending on the area they serve. Their day usually ends between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. The route drivers' salaries are based on commission.

Before hiring, all aspects of the job description are covered in detail by the operations manager and the supervisor. If the applicant is available, they are scheduled to work a few hours with an existing employee in order to provide hands on introduction to the responsibilities of the

particular job. The operations manager and the supervisor interview each applicant, regardless of the position they are applying for. The initial interviews are conducted at the division office. Any additional interviews are either conducted at the division office (if a route driver), or conducted at the account location if the position is for an attendant or cafeteria manager. When hired, employees are provided three uniforms that are purchased by the company. New uniforms are distributed to the employees twice yearly to ensure proper attire at work. Cleanliness and positive attitudes are expected by management and are part of the employees' job descriptions.

Customer service and providing the best possible food service is the primary focus of "Foods 'R Us." Customers of the company repeatedly praise the service and food choices they are provided with and numerous pats on the back are given to the route drivers. Although the attendants in the manufacturing locations are employees of "Foods 'R Us," these attendants are treated as if they are employees of the manufacturing facility. The route drivers are also treated with a great deal of respect from customers.

"Foods 'R Us" recently purchased another vending company, Consolidated Vending, which was in "Chapter 13" proceedings. The troubled company was operating with a negative cash flow, and had been purchased by "Foods 'R Us" to retain the competitive edge in the Southeast. The company would continue to be called "Foods 'R Us." Following three months of working with consultants regarding how the company would be structured and to determine the operating procedures to be used, management decided that the "Foods 'R Us" operating procedures would be followed. They also decided that no employee layoffs would take place for at least six months, in hopes that they would not be necessary. Further, employees would be provided a listing of available positions at other locations, in the event they would like to transfer. The decision to continue to operate as "Foods 'R Us" was based on the success the

company had experienced over the years, and the customer surveys that were taken from both companies' current customers. This information was communicated to the operations managers and the supervisors, and included a statement that "everything possible will be done to prevent any employee layoffs." The "layoff" information was not communicated to any other employees, only management. However, written communication regarding openings in other locations was distributed to all employees.

Over the next six months, it was obvious that the employees of the former Consolidated Vending were extremely reluctant to conform to the change, and to work under the policies and procedures of "Foods 'R Us." Several route drivers and attendants had resigned, stating that they "just could not handle the new way of working." At this point, several supervisors from the "old company" had also resigned, making way for a current assistant supervisor with "Foods 'R Us" to be promoted to supervisor. The territory for the new supervisor was already established, and included one route driver from the "old company" who had been labeled a difficult employee.

The new supervisor, Gary, was announced in an employee meeting held on Friday afternoon, and the employees reporting to Gary were provided time for questions and answers. Gary stressed the company's customer focus, and that each one would be expected to perform at the level expected by the company. He also noted that anyone with specific concerns could schedule time to meet with him to discuss and work through any problems. All but one route driver supervised by Gary had been employed by the original "Foods 'R Us." This one route driver, Nick, proved to be a difficult one.

The following Monday, Nick did not arrive at his usually scheduled time and called in sick at 9:30 a.m. However, by 6:00 a.m., Gary began to take care of the route, since customers

depended on someone delivering food as early at 5:30 a.m. On the route, Gary found that the vending machines had not been properly serviced, and the fronts of the machines were dirty in every account location. There were several complaints about Nick, such as "the machines were never merchandised appropriately," "there were too many of one selection" (i.e., there were four rows of the same type of crackers and only two choices of candy). Also, several of the account contacts expressed their concern that Nick was not representing the company appropriately. They called this 30 year-old a "grumpy old man" and stated that Nick acts rudely to the account's employees, especially when refunds are required or if they want change for a larger bill. They noted that he was rarely in uniform and always looked as if he had slept in his clothes.

When the route was completed for the day, Gary pulled employee records on Nick, and found that he was habitually calling in sick. In fact, after a review of his attendance records, it was found that Nick called in sick almost every Monday, sometimes on Friday and Monday. No one had ever addressed his absences. Gary also found that his route consistently showed inventory and money shortages.

Nick came to work on Tuesday, and at approximately 9:30 a.m., Gary met him at one of the account locations. As Nick began to gather stock from the back of the truck, Gary expressed his thanks to Nick for being at work on Tuesday, and asked if he needed any help getting his machines cleaned and in proper order. Nick responded that "my machines are just fine and I do not need any help." Gary immediately relayed to Nick that he had taken care of the route the day before, and expressed some of his own concerns about how the machines looked, as well as the inventory and money shortages. Nick immediately became defensive and told Gary that he "had always worked this way and nobody told me any different and so I must be doing just fine."

Gary asked Nick to please page him as soon as he arrived back at the office because Gary wanted to go over the route's paperwork with him.

That afternoon, both of them arrived at the office at the same time. It was obvious to Gary that Nick did not want to meet with him; therefore, Gary approach Nick as soon as he finished unloading his truck and asked to meet with him in the office. As they walked toward the office, Nick told Gary that he didn't "understand what the big deal was." Nick went on to say that he didn't have to change the way he had been doing things and that he wouldn't change.

Gary immediately began the conversation by stating that the company's name was "Foods 'R Us" and that the "Foods 'R Us" policies and procedures would be adhered to from this point forward. The meeting continued by reviewing Nick's job description thoroughly, and having Nick sign that he had read and understood his job description, and what was expected of him. Gary also stated that Nick would need to be in the company uniform that was provided for him when reporting to work, and again reviewed the section of his job description regarding appearance and cleanliness. Gary relayed that there were numerous complaints at the account locations regarding his rudeness to employees. Nick abruptly stated that "those people interrupt me on purpose and I can't get my work done." Gary stated that "those people are your customers and the purpose of a route sales and customer service employee was to please those people." Gary informed Nick that his absences had totaled 15 over the last three months and that the next absence without notifying his immediate supervisor before 5:00 a.m. would result in a written warning and 60 day probation. In addition, Gary stated "if you are absent again without a doctor's note to explain why you were absent, you will be given a written warning and 60 day probation. These are company policies." The following day, Wednesday, Nick did not report to

work and did not call his immediate supervisor. His supervisor followed the written warning and probation procedures.

On Thursday, Nick reported to work on time, in his company uniform, but it looked as if he had slept in it for three days and he smelled as if he had never heard of personal hygiene. His supervisor and the operations manager were present when Nick arrived to work.

Discussion Questions:

Which counseling approach would be best suited for this situation?

What action do you think the supervisor and the operations manager should have taken when Nick arrived to work on Thursday?

What do you think is causing the problem?

What other interventions could be used with this employee?

Reference

Corey, Gerald. (1996). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (5th ed). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing